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Israeli airstrike partially destroying nearly 1,600year-old Gaza church stuns Christian community

10/26/2023 // Kevin Hughes // 2K Views



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The oldest church in the Gaza Strip had been acting as a shelter for hundreds of Palestinians amid several days of persistent Israeli bombings. But on Oct. 19, the church was hit by Israeli airstrikes, leaving the region's Christian community devastated.

The Israeli military said the two airstrikes that hit the nearly 1,600-year-old Church of Saint Porphyrius were meant for a church-run social services building adjacent to the main part of the old building.



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The social services building was one of four buildings belonging to the church's complex. The Israeli military claimed without providing sufficient evidence that one of the buildings within the church compound was serving as a command and control center for Hamas.

"Most of Gaza's Christians have sought refuge in churches because they have nowhere else to go. We were surprised. We did not receive a warning to evacuate," said one witness interviewed by *Middle East Eye*. "We don't have internet. We only have electricity when we turn on the generator for two hours when we need to pump water from the well and fill our tanks."

About 400 Christians and Muslims forced to move from their homes by Israel's continuous bombing campaign over the past two weeks were taking refuge in the church. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, at least 18 people were killed and many others are injured or still missing under the rubble.

The Church of Saint Porphyrius is the oldest church building still in use in Gaza, serving the approximately 1,000 Palestinian Christians in the territory.



It was originally built in 425 A.D. and named after Saint Porphyrius, the fifth-century bishop of Gaza. His tomb is in the northeastern corner of the church. The church was converted into a mosque in the seventh century before the Crusaders restored it as a church in the mid-12th century.

"The church is 2,000 years old, and the Israelis struck it. There were no weapons in the church, it was sheltering children," a survivor at the site told local media.

"The whole building collapsed to the ground. We aren't able to pull people from under the rubble. Are these the Israelis' list of targets? The Christians have nothing to do with any of this. What have the Christians done?" said another man at an adjacent hospital treating the wounded.

Targeting churches constitutes a war crime

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which administers the church and Gaza's small Greek Orthodox community, released a statement a day after the bombing condemning the Israeli airstrike.

"Targeting churches and their institutions, along with the shelters they provide to protect innocent citizens, especially children and women who have lost their homes due to Israeli airstrikes on residential areas over the past 13 days, constitutes a war crime that cannot be ignored," the patriarchate said in the statement.

Ramzi Khoury, head of the Higher Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine, depicted the bombing as part of Israel's "intentions to annihilate the Palestinian people."

"Targeting places of worship constitutes a war crime, and international law makes it clear that houses of worship may under no circumstances be subjected to attacks," Khoury said.

Reacting to the significant backlash to the bombing, the Israeli military alleged that Hamas intentionally embedded itself into the church and its civilian infrastructure and is using the refugees hiding in the church as human shields. (Related: CONFIRMED: Israel ordered IDF to STAND DOWN and let Hamas attack – now Israel wants full-scale war to fulfill decades-long plan for "Greater Israel.")

Follow Chaos.news for more news about the chaos in Gaza.

Watch the video below about Israel's bombing of the Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza.

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This video is from the alltheworldsastage channel on *Brighteon.com*.

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